

Classical Theorists and Their Ideas

It was 6pm and I had just got out of class and was heading to the Anteater for dinner which as we all know is the busiest time of the day because everyone goes to dinner around 6. Upon arrival there was an enormous line to get inside and it didn't seem to move any faster. As I waited in line to get in I began to overhear a conversation between these two men in front of me but I couldn't see their faces. One man was wearing a beige colored coat and the other had on a black suit. They were discussing problems in society and their theories as to why things happened, unfortunately right when I was getting intrigued into their conversations they made it inside to find seats.

Upon being inside the dining hall, I dropped off my belongings in one of the isolated islands as I called them in order to reserve my seat while I got up to get food. After getting my food I sat down to eat, while I was eating I began to hear the voices of the two men whose conversation I had overheard, as I turned to my left there they were, the two men. As I saw their faces I immediately realized who they were, the man with the beige coat was Emile Durkheim and the man in the black suit was George Simmel. I had heard of them through my sociology professor who was good friends with them but I had never actually met them. As I sat there I continued to listen to their conversation.

“I don't know Durkheim, there is just something about the way that a society is held together that intrigues me”

“I definitely understand where you're coming from, like it's fascinating to observe the way people interact with each other and how they are grouped together into categories such as through experiences, interest, beliefs or even values” said Durkheim.

“Take the people in this dining hall for instance, most of them are sitting alone with nobody to interact with and others are in tables with more than 5 people yet only 4 of the people in that table are interacting with each other while the others just sit in silence. My point is what would happen if we were to group them, what if we took one of these kids and had him sit and interact with a random person sitting alone” said Simmel.

“Okay I understand where you’re going with this, two people talking together can result in a higher chance of them building a relationship and it makes sharing “personal thoughts” (Avery, Lecture) more likely” said Durkheim.

“Yes exactly! You see Durkheim, dyads are easier to work with compared to triads and quads. For example take these two people sitting in front of us, they seem to really get along with each other and they probably know each other very well, however, if a third person were to come in it would “change the kinds of interactions that occur among all members”” (Avery, Lecture).

“What if there were to be four people or even five together?” asked Durkheim.

“In that case there would be a sense of dominance within the group and less sharing of one's personal thoughts” said Simmel.

“Anyways, I heard you were writing a book on the the study of suicide, how’s that going or what is it about?” asked Simmel.

“It’s actually going great, you see I have always considered a “certain level suicide in society as normal” (Avery, Lecture) and in the book I focus on that and how highly intensed social structures can help with the prevention of suicide, I believe that a person doesnt commint suicide because they want to but because they are influenced by a higher power, that power being society and lacking social bonds” explained Durkheim.

“Normal? How is suicide seen as a normal thing? That is preposterous, contrary to your belief I think that suicide is a personal action in which an individual decides to engage in, nobody tells them to take their own life, rather they chose to do it” argued Simmel.

“I respect your opinion Simmel but hear me out, my theory is that people commit suicide due to lack of belonging in the world, they feel isolated from everything and everyone. Which is why I think that people who are more involved and more sociably active have lower rates in suicide”.

“I see, that actually makes sense which brings us back to the fact that interactions with other people are an important aspect in society, it is the glue that holds it together” said Simmel.

I had finished eating and decided that it was probably time for me to head back to my dorm and study.